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A bipartisan coalition of lawmakers, including several from Illinois, asked the Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday to open a formal review of a controversial permit that would increase ammonia and sludge dumping in the Great Lakes.

The letter calls the permit, issued by Indiana to a BP oil refinery, "egregious" because it would allow the company to increase its ammonia discharges by 54 percent and sludge discharges by 35 percent. Ammonia boosts fish-killing algae; sludge contains heavy metals.

"These staggering figures are wholly contradictory to the intent of the Clean Water Act, which seeks to minimize the degradation of our water quality," the letter continues. "We are deeply concerned that a permit of this nature was issued."

The letter's co-signers include Reps. Mark Kirk, Rahm Emanuel, Judy Biggert, Jesse Jackson Jr., Peter Roskam, Danny Davis, Bobby Rush and Dan Lipinski, all of Illinois.

In an interview, Kirk called the waste permit "poor judgment on a grand scale by a company that should know better" and said it would be revoked -- if not by BP, which has advertised heavily to brand itself as environmentally friendly, then by the EPA or Congress.

Kirk plans to take a group of congressional staff and environmentalists on a boat tour of the dumping site Friday. He said he is talking with congressional legal experts to explore options to stop increased discharges, including "litigation, regulation, legislation and public relations."

The Tribune reported the permit's existence on Sunday. On Monday, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Emanuel sent the EPA letters that opposed the permit and asked the agency to place a hold on it until regulators could assure them the increased dumping would not affect drinking water quality or violate the Clean Water Act.

Chicago also is fighting the permit. Mayor Richard Daley on Wednesday said increased pollution from the refinery in Whiting, Ind., would work against the city's long-term efforts to clean up the lake.